

## Close to Home Study Guide

# Dealing with Elder Abuse

### 1. Opening (1 minute)\*

Acknowledge with the group that dealing with abuse of any kind is multifaceted and complex. At different points in our lives, we may become the abused, an abuser, or an intervener.

Lead the group in prayer—your own or the following: Creator God, we have gathered in your presence to consider anew how we can live with love and respect for all people, and especially our elders. Help us to listen. Help us to learn. Amen.

### 2. Story-telling (8 minutes)

Read or tell the story of Maria and Carol.

- What are other contributing factors to elder abuse?
- Optional or rhetorical question: With whom do you most identify in this story?

### 3. Review of pamphlet (6 minutes)

Read “The problem of elder abuse” (p. 4).

- Why is elder abuse so easy to hide or justify?
- What are some of the three signs of elder abuse?

### 4. Reading of Scripture text (15 minutes)

- Who are the elders in your life?
- Read Exodus 20:12. In our time, what does honoring your parents and other elders look like?

Read Colossians 3:8-17 and note the comments on page 7.

- How does Paul’s instruction illuminate our relationship with elderly people?
- In light of this discussion, who could be added to verse 11?

\* The suggested time frames are for a 45-minute session. With more discussion and storytelling, you will need to adjust upward, and possibly extend to a second session.

## 5. Steps toward healing (14 minutes)

Review Steps toward healing (p. 8). Highlight the importance of acknowledging the abuse.

Choose from these perspectives for personal sharing.

- A. If you are a victim of elder abuse, what do you need right now? What kind of help do you wish would be available to you?
- B. Review the list of reasons why people become abusive to elders.
  - What would you add to it?
  - Do you see any of these tendencies in yourself?
  - What support might you need?
- C. If you need to intervene in an abusive situation, what support do you need?
- D. In light of your sharing, what are the next steps for this group?

## 6. Closing (1 minute)

Read Psalm 121, emphasizing God's promise of protection. Agree together that you will follow God in bringing this promise to reality for the elders in your life.



---

This study guide is written by Sharon Williams, editor of *Adult Bible Study* (Faith & Life Resources) and Minister of Worship with Nueva Vida Norristown New Life Mennonite Church, Norristown, Pennsylvania. It is one of a series of free downloadable study guides for the Close to Home pamphlets, which can be ordered from MennoMedia of the Mennonite Church (see [www.mpn.net/closetohome](http://www.mpn.net/closetohome)) or the Mennonite Brethren Kindred Productions ([www.kindredproductions.com/closetohome](http://www.kindredproductions.com/closetohome)).